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Duitse, Engelse en Franse samenvatting

Summary

This Side Of Death

The funerary components of secularizing cultural landscapes in the Netherlands 1576-2010

The central research question addressed in this book is how funerary culture became secularized in the Netherlands between 1576 and 2010 and how this process manifested itself in the cultural landscape. The research focuses on the following questions: In what way did the secularization of funerary culture lead to conflict in a religious society? How did the authorities mediate between the conflicting interests of the medical profession, politicians, church leaders, and citizens? What were the secular codes that the authorities and society constructed? How, as the consequences of these codes, did funerary constructs shape the secularizing cultural landscape? And, finally, how did funerary culture contribute to the formation of civil society and civil religion?

The first part of this book describes the conflicts that developed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as a result of the incipient secularization of funerary culture. It is here that the two themes that are central to the rest of the book are introduced: how funerary culture came to fall under the medical realm and under the civil realm.

The second chapter, which is about military casualties, describes the silence that has long surrounded this topic. Because of the introduction of military service, in about 1800, conflict developed about the custom of leaving the fallen in the empty landscape, unburied. This conflict resulted in soldiers acquiring the right to an individual grave and grave marker. The third chapter deals with the process of dying and shows how in 1767 the Society to Rescue People from Drowning sought attention for the problem of suspended animation, by providing care for victims of near drowning. New physiological insights prompted a discussion about the custom of leaving people who had been rescued from drowning to their fate. The society instructed people in how to provide aid and rewarded those who provided such aid. Chapter 4 discusses the disposal of the dead. This question is illustrated with the attempt by the town council of Arnhem during an epidemic in 1783 to bury victims who were without means outside of the town's built-up area. This chapter is written from the perspective of gender, and shows that initially it was poor women who played a substantial part in the opposition to this plan. The poor wanted to once more be buried with their ancestors, in the church cemetery. After two uprisings over the churchyard, the town council reversed its

plan. Chapter 5 discusses the process of mourning and describes the grief of two Protestant family men over the death of members of their immediate and extended family at the end of the eighteenth century and in the nineteenth century. Grief left people feeling empty. In a deeper sense, this feeling related to a ritual void that the Reformation had created by introducing such austerity in the funerary culture. In a practical sense, these men resolved their inner conflict by partly loosening themselves from the Dutch Reformed church; by accepting medical help; by believing in a reunification with their loved ones in Heaven; and by, in the case of the one, writing about his grief, and, in the case of the other, primarily seeking solace at the memorial in the cemetery. This way of mourning was probably representative of the Protestant upper middle class.

The second part of the book deals with the codes that eventually formed the secular blueprint for death. This involved the establishment of a national law governing the disposal of the dead, and the introduction of laws by local administrators and of funeral arrangement made by the citizens themselves. These secular codes made it possible for funerary culture to start to move into the medical and civil realms.

Chapter 6 shows how the authorities led the way around the disposal of the dead in the nineteenth century. To this end, they allied themselves with doctors, who, thanks to empirical research, were now able to provide medical certainty about when life was extinct. The introduction of a requirement that a general practitioner examine the deceased allayed people's fear for apparent death. A ban on interment within churches, together with the laying out of cemeteries outside of the built-up area, ensured that decomposition was not detrimental to public health. These codifications caused funerary culture to definitively fall under the medical and civil realm. Chapter 7 relates people's attitudes towards vampires and people who are drowning to their fear for apparent death. As a result of research into the physiology of death, the problem of what to do with people who had experienced near drowning became medicalized in the second half of the eighteenth century. Doctors portrayed people's fear of vampires as superstition, so that, from the nineteenth century onwards, vampires were relegated to horror culture and horror films. Through the example of a malaria epidemic in the town of Groningen, Chapter 8 shows how the location of disposal of the dead became part of the medical and civil realm. Starting in 1827, considerations of hygiene led to the creation of cemeteries outside of the town. To keep the memory of the dead alive, both the appearance and the visiting of cemeteries were now emphasized. Chapter 9 describes how, during the process of denominationalizing, Roman Catholics reacted to the medicalization of the disposal of the dead. When, in 1872, a parishioner of a village in the province of Limburg died and the Catholic portion of the municipal cemetery had not yet been completed, that portion of the cemetery had to be demarcated and

consecrated before the local pastor was prepared to bury the deceased. The cremation of the anarchist Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis in 1919 led to a compromise between Catholic and socialist politicians. Socialist civil servants were allowed to go to the funeral procession in Amsterdam as long as their Catholic colleagues were to be allowed time off work should they wish to engage in a similar tribute. In Chapter 10, the example of funerals in the municipality of Groenlo shows how it was only in the twentieth century that people in this remote community and its surrounding rural area gradually adopted the secular funerary culture.

The third, concluding part of this book examines funerary constructs as a consequence of secular codes. It is in these constructs that the medical and civic nature of funerary culture become evident. First, death became a social taboo. Later, death – as a conclusion of our earthly existence – received a personal touch.

Chapter 11 is about death portraits. It shows how portraits of the deceased in the form of reliquary holders, funerary monuments, paintings, death masks, and photos were given positions in either the public or the private sphere. In particular, from the seventeenth century onwards, we see that the death portrait also becomes part of the medical and civic realm – and thus becomes secularized. Chapter 12 provides an overview of the secularization of funerals in the Netherlands. In the socially more mobile society, starting in the seventeenth century, insurers, undertakers, societies, cooperatives, and companies brought a decent funeral within reach of the citizens. Chapter 13 discusses the location of disposal of the dead, and shows how the architecture within and around cemeteries and crematoria became secularized from the nineteenth century onwards. By the end of the twentieth century, cemeteries were transformed into multifunctional memorial parks that were given an inspired yet secular structure through their landscape architecture. Finally, in Chapter 14, it is suggested that the culture of mourning in the long nineteenth century should be characterized by the term *Biedermeier*. Memorial jewellery and art made with human hair, death portraits, a cult of the grave, and a belief in being reunited with one's loved ones in Heaven formed the funerary components of domestic life in middle-class households.

This research has shown that the ritual void that occurred after the Reformation paved the way for the secularization of funerary culture. Due to empirical research, there was now medical certainty about the moment at which death occurred and about the appropriate location of disposal of the dead. Middle-class norms formed the foundation for a new social code of conduct during funerals, at the cemetery, and during the period of mourning. The most important secular constructs are the examination of the deceased by a general practitioner, the funeral company, and the memorial park. Multiple funerary organizations have contributed to the establishment of a secular *civil society*. And eventually the

funerary aspects of *civil society* also found expression in *civil religion*. This is evidenced by the annual attention given to various terminal diseases, the secular version of All Souls Day, and the yearly memorial concert at the oldest crematorium. In this way, the attention of Dutch society has shifted from the other side to this side of death.

Vertaling: Suzanne Needs